

Once Upon a Time there was a Piece of Wood

by CeffylGwyn

Category: Harry Potter

Genre: Hurt-Comfort, Romance

Language: English

Characters: Fred W., George W., Hermione G., Molly W.

Pairings: Fred W./Hermione G.

Status: Completed

Published: 2016-04-12 12:17:59

Updated: 2016-04-12 12:17:59

Packaged: 2016-04-27 18:17:35

Rating: T

Chapters: 1

Words: 2,325

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: One-shot for Screaming Faeries' "Walt Disney AU Challenge" and the "HP Creatures Challenge" on livejournal. Fred's gone, George is listless and Hermione is lost in spirit if not in body. A master painter has something Fred left behind, something that, with a little bit of Magic and a Wish, might just have changed everything forever... *Complete*

Once Upon a Time there was a Piece of Wood

Challenge: Walt Disney AU Challenges by Screaming Faeries on Forums & HP Creatures - April Challenge on Livejournal

Prompt: PINOCCHIO~ "Inventor Gepetto creates a wooden marionette called Pinocchio. His wish that Pinocchio be a real boy is unexpectedly granted by a fairy. The fairy assigns Jiminy Cricket to act as Pinocchio's "conscience" and keep him out of trouble."

Extra Prompts: Disney~ (dialogue) "A thing like that ought to be worth a fortune to someone.", (plot/action) A naughty little boy who gets into a lot of trouble, (creature) Fairy, (word) Wish, (dialogue) "A lie keeps growing and growing until it's as plain as the nose on your face." HP Creatures~ (creature) fairy, (prompt) midnight

Form: One-shot

Rules: (Disney) You can combine with any other challenge/competition on any other forum, The minimum word count for any story is 500 words. There is no set maximum, but please keep it a one or two-shot, You must use at least five of the listed prompts for each movie, but you can use more of them if you wish, Any content is accepted, but please leave warnings for anything M-Rated. (HP

Creatures) Story/art/etc must contain "a creature" as a main theme or character (it doesn't have to be the creature provided in the prompt), All Pairings are welcome (slash, het, femmeslash, gen), Prompts can be combined with other challenges, Choose one prompt or use them all (or write a drabble for your own prompt), Incorporate the prompts in any way that you choose.

**Rating: **T

**Word Count: **1,917 words

**Pairings: **Fred/Hermione (insinuated)

**Warnings: **Suggestions of death

**Notes: **AU!Fred's not dead, EWE

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><p>Once upon a time there was..."A king!" my young readers will instantly exclaim. No, children, that's where you're wrong. Once upon a time there was a piece of woodâ€|<p>

* * *

><p>With a deep breath that filled her lungs, Hermione blew back the dust from the wooden frame, her fingers seeking the golden plaque at the bottom and tracing the name engraved there:<p>

Frederick Gideon Weasley

She could have cried then, but she didn't. Her well of tears had dried. The war was done and too many had been lost. Hermione traced his name again and the lump in her throat grew.

The picture was larger than she was, and covered by a grubby painters sheet. Slowly, hesitantly, Hermione pulled back the cloth and suddenly it was as if he stood before her again, hands in his pockets, handsome, painted face smiling back at her.

The tears broke free then. She had thought there was nothing left in her, but still, Hermione cried. So much had been left unsaid, and now it never would be. The regret pierced her like a knife. George had not questioned her, when Hermione would come round with dinner in an attempt to pull him from his depression. Now, several months after the final battle, they had settled into comfortable familiarity, George had even smiled for the first time the other day.

It did not last long however.

The next afternoon, Hermione had entered the twin's flat and found the red head crumpled on the floor, sobbing over a letter.

Dear Mr Weasley,

Upon the passing of your brother, Mr F. Weasley we wish to inform you that his estate has been left in it's entirety to you. We would however, like to advise you of an item held by a Mr S. Gepetto at his studio -

L'arte di Gepetto

22 Puppeteer Road

London WC2 5HS

You, or a party with written consent from yourself, are required to retrieve said item by the 17th of August 1999.

Kind Regards and Deepest Sympathies,

Reginald Kondrik

_Department of Family and Fortunes _

"Hermione, I can't, you have to - please."

She couldn't very well say no to the heartbroken look on the face of the red haired man. So, two days later, in a disillusioned nook of London, Hermione opened the door to Gepetto's store and stepped inside.

"I am sorry, for your loss, Signorina." The little white haired wizard said from behind her, as she stared at the painting. "He was a good boy - I could tell from first time he came into my little _negozi, si._"

Hermione couldn't help but choke back a laugh through her tears, "On the contrary, Signor Gepetto, he was very, very naughty. Always getting into trouble, ever since he was a little boy." she said quietly, her eyes tracing the smirking curve of his lips - a perfect replica of how they had appeared in life. "You are very talented Signor." Hermione took a deep breath. She turned to the blushing little wizard and smiled, brushing away the tears that had tracked down her cheeks. "Thank you. He is perfect."

Gepetto shrugged, his cheeks scarlet, "Ah Signorina you are too kind," he said. "Besides, it was he who commissioned me. Your young Mr Weasley should animate in a few days, we imbued the painting with his magic and memories. It will be almost as if he had never gone, a thing like that ought to be worth a fortune to someone!"

The little painter suddenly seem to realise the connotations of what he had said as Hermione froze and he quickly mumbled his apologies, disappearing into a back room.

Hermione just felt stupid, she should have known - all wizard paintings moved and animated once their subjects had passed. She was unsure how George would take all of this but he deserved to know. Hell, she didn't know how she felt about all of this.

They made arrangements then for the large painting to be shipped to George's flat above the shop the next morning. Bundling all the paperwork together, Hermione bid farewell to the painter and disapparated.

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><p>"I'm worried about George, Mrs Weasley." Hermione sighed, sipping her cup of tea. "He's completely withdrawn himself again. Just as he

was starting to make some progress."<p>

The two witches were sitting in the kitchen of the Burrow. The older woman smiled sadly at the young brunette. "I'll go have a talk to him shall I?"

Hermione smiled wanly. "I think that might be a good idea." she replied, setting her empty cup back on its saucer and with a wave of her wand, sending it floating into the sink. The red haired witch did the same and together they stood from their chairs.

"First though Hermione dear, I was wondering if you could give me a quick hand with something?" Molly asked, taking off her apron.

"Anything Mrs Weasley."

"We've appeared to have somehow gotten a fairy infestation at the bottom of the garden and the little beasts are sending the gnomes wild - getting up to all sorts of mischief." the older witch explained. "Would you be able to give me a hand catching them so they can be relocated to a more appropriate location? With the two of us at it, it should only take a couple of minutes."

Hermione blinked and smiled, "Certainly Mrs Weasley, what type are they?"

"Gold-fairies, dearie." Molly Weasley said as they stepped out into the garden and headed to the little shed at the back of the property. "Harmless enough, but far more mischievous than I can manage living at the bottom of my garden I'm afraid."

"CroÃ-siÃ³g?" Hermione asked, her brows crinkling a little at the middle as the two witches pulled some large jars from the shelves and headed back into the garden. "Life-fairies? Aren't they good luck? Bringing fertility and new life to things and such?"

Mrs Weasley sniffed, "Good luck they may well be, but I cannot have them disturbing the peace! The gnomes have become far too vivacious - I had two of them actually try and get into the house the other day- Oh look there's one, catch it!"

Years on, when Hermione thought back to this scene, she would smile at the knowledge that they no doubt looked incredibly silly. Two grown women racing about the bushes with their wands drawn and jars open, chasing teeny tiny golden fey.

It was just as Hermione managed to get the last of the Gold-fairies in the jar that the creature decided to sneeze in her face. Gold-dust managed to cover her entire face and hair, and she only just managed to get the lid closed through watering eyes.

Fifteen minutes and three scourify spells later, Hermione had managed to get most of the dust off - although her hair still glittered. She would have been grumpy but Mrs Weasley was too thankful. Besides, she figured the novelty of the event might just give George something to laugh about.

* * *

><p>"Oh George."</p>

The words were half sobbed as Molly Weasley flew into the twin's flat and embraced her distraught son. Hermione suddenly felt like an intruder and she waited awkwardly by the door as the young man sobbed into his mother's arms. Finally, she decided to go into the kitchen and make them all a cup of tea, and quietly scuttled from the room.

Hermione sighed as she stood, hands braced on the kitchen bench, watching the kettle boil. Her mind was blank. She felt hollow. The kettle whistled and ever the model of efficiency, Hermione waved her wand and summoned them some mugs.

"Hermione dear?!"

The curly haired witch was out of the kitchen and back in the lounge at the sound of Mrs Weasley's voice.

"Hermione, I'll be taking George with me back to the Burrow for a little while," Molly said calmly and quietly, only the faintest quiver to her voice. "Would you lock up here when we go please?"

Hermione blinked and smiled, "Of course Mrs Weasley."

It was just as the mother and son were about to step into the floo that George suddenly reached out and grabbed Hermione's arm, holding onto her bicep like a man clinging to life.

"Can you move it?" George said urgently. "Take it away for a while, please Hermione?"

The gears in Hermione's brain whirred as she processed everything. 'It' was almost certainly the picture, and come to think of it no one had informed the rest of the family of its existence - she certainly hadn't, and she'd bet 500 galleons George hadn't. Surely there was someone more suited to look after it for him than her?

George seemed to sense her hesitation and only gripped her arm tighter, more desperately. "Please."

With a sigh, she finally gave in. Hermione took George's hand in her own and smiled sadly back at him. "Of course George," she said quietly, "Of course I will."

A few moments later, they were gone and Hermione was all alone in the Weasley flat. Quickly and efficiently, she set about tidying up and locking all the doors, before finally heading into George's room. There, in front of his wardrobe stood Fred Weasley, smiling and still in his frame. Hermione found she couldn't look at his face, it tore at her heart too much to see him so happy. Quickly, she threw the sheet back over him, and his smirk was hidden from view once more. Drawing her wand, she murmured a spell to shrink the picture to a size she could easily carry, picked it up and disappeared into the floo, calling out the name of her house.

Finally, the flat was empty.

* * *

><p>Later that night, after a shower (which still hadn't gotten rid of all the fairy dust), Hermione found herself standing before the covered painting once more. Upon returning to her flat, she had moved the frame to her lounge and returned it to its original size. Now, with a whoosh she pulled back the sheet.</p>

Hermione started then, and could not stop. It was a full size portrait and every detail was perfect, from the way his hair stuck out a little on the side, to the slightly frayed edge of his maroon jumper. His hazel eyes were warm and cheeky as they stared back at her. She didn't cry this time, what she felt was beyond sadness.

"I always thought I would live my life, in a way that free from any regret." Hermione said, her voice barely a murmur. "A lie keeps growing and growing until it's as plain as the nose on your face. The more I lied to myself about what was between us, the stronger it grew." she was bitter then, "I should have told you how I felt and I did not. I wish-"

Her voice trembled, broke and a shaking hand reached up to trace the line of his cheek.

"I Wishâ€¢!"

* * *

><p>The tiny spec of gold dust gleamed against the canvas, piercing through the darkness, the clock chiming midnight as the golden light grew and grew. The red-haired man fell forwards, yawned and stretched, suddenly aware of the strangeness of the room he was in.</p>

Something felt strange. Alarmed, he looked down at his hands, they were rough, canvas-like and coloured weirdly. What kind of prank was this?!

Whatever it was, it wasn't a very good one - and he, Fredrick Weasley, was going to find out who pulled it and make them pay!

* * *

><p>AN: **Wrote this for Screaming Faeries challenge and realised it filled the HP Creatures challenge on live journal too so yolo, submitting for both. This is a one-shot (although I know I'm evil for that cliffhanger - sorry!), and I hope it fulfilled the prompt satisfactorily. The first line of this piece is the first line of the pinocchio novel - I thought it fit well. CroÃ-siÃ³g is simply the combo of two Irish Gaelic words: CroÃ- - life SiÃ³g - fairy. Sorry-not-sorry for the shameless Into the Woods reference. I hope you enjoyed!

End
file.